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ON

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND WATER WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHHATTISGARH

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TRIBE : DEFINITIONAL PROBLEM, DIVERSITY AND AFFINITIES

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Introduction

India is bestowed with its rich heritage and culture. It is an abode for a diverse human population groups. Perhaps, nowhere in the world except India, where people in a small geographical area are distributed in such a large number of ethnic, caste, tribe, religious, cultural and linguistic groups.

India holds a unique position in the tribal map of the world. It has the distinction of having the second largest population of tribe after Africa. From time immemorial the tribes are an integral part of the Indian population and occupy a unique position in the Indian society. The tribals inhabit diverse ecological niches, experience wide socio-economic disparities, and practice different cultures and religions. The tribals have thus adjusted to the situation according to their own ingenuity. The biological diversity of tribes in India presents a unique scenario.

What is tribe?

There is a much debate on the use of the term *tribe*. Whom to label the term *tribe*? Anthropological definition of the term with reference to isolation, subsistence economy, illiteracy etc. seems weak at present to label a community with the term *tribe*. Instead the use of term *indigenous* is much in vogue now. The term is used in a generic sense as it encompasses a large assortment of kinds because tribal peoples fall into too many distinct groups and the historical relations among these are too complex to enable us to give a general definition of them all.

In fact the term "*tribe*" is nowhere defined in the Indian Constitution and the people who are involved in with the study of tribes are still not on the same wavelength regarding the concept and definition of *tribe*. The ancient and medieval sources of information including the Vedic and the Epic literature mention various tribes like the Bhils, the Kollas, the Kiratas, the Kinnaras, the Kiris, the Matsayas, the Nisadas and the Banars. It was a homogenous and self-contained unit without any hierarchal discrimination.

The term *tribe* derived from a *Latin* root, the Middle English term "*tribus*" meaning the traditional three political divisions or patrician orders into which the early Romans were grouped, came to evolve into the modern English "*tribe*". With the Romans, the *tribe* was a political division while the Greeks seem to have equated it somewhat with their "fraternities" at times with geographical divisions

at others. In Irish history however the term meant families or communities or persons having the same surname (Ray, 1972). Probably it entered in English through Old French. Earliest mention of the word in 14th century was largely confined to biblical references. Shakespear showed some fondness for the term. Later the word *tribe* designated as the formal unit in biological taxonomy. The term *tribe* generally connotes, in English, "a word indicating a group of primitive or barbaric clans under some recognized chiefs". Somebody says, tribe is relative physical isolation, which results in a high degree of breeding in isolation (Pal and Jain, 1988). Anthropology struck root in the colonial coverage when many administrators took interest in studying the other groups of people and cultures, in general. The European Colonial Administration extended in many parts of the globe, and had an idea about the autochthones people of their occupied territory connected with other cultures led to their description as "native" and sometimes, in derogatory parlance, as "savages", "aboriginals" or the "primitives".

An anthropological definition of tribe, with the parameters of definition being gradually refined and made rigorous, gradually emerged in the 1960s. In general, anthropologists agree on the criteria by which a tribe may be described: common territory, a tradition of common descent, common language, common culture, and a common name- all these forming the basis of the joining of smaller groups such as villages, bands, districts, or lineages. By the 1980s, the concept of tribe has performed several rotations of fashion over the preceding 20 years. Some of the important concept/definitions are as follows:

Year	Definition	Reference
1. 1901	"...a <i>tribe</i> as we find it in India is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which as a rule does not denote any specific occupation; generally claiming common descent from a mythical or historical ancestor, and occasionally from an animal, but in some parts of the country held together rather by the obligations of blood feud than by the tradition of kinship, usually speaking the same language and occupying, professing or claiming to occupy a definite tract of country. A tribe is not necessarily endogamous; that is to say, it is not an invariable rule that a man of a particular tribe must marry a woman of that tribe and cannot marry a woman of a different tribe".	Risley and Gait (First definition of Tribe appeared in Census of India)
2. 1907	"...a larger or smaller aggregate of people who occupy a certain tract of hunting and food ground in common, who speak the same language with dialectical differences, who acknowledge a common relatedness to other tribes".	Howitt (One of the early Statement on tribe)
3. 1911	"...a <i>tribe</i> in its original form is distinguished from a caste by the fact that its basis is political rather than economic or social. The members believe that they	Gait (Census of India)

all have a common origin, but what hold them together is community of interest and the need of mutual defense; and aliens who are willing to throw in their lot with the tribe are usually freely admitted. Especially in the case with women obtained by purchase or capture. The tribe is not associated with any specific occupation, and there is no functional restriction. It is also not necessarily endogamous, though in practice it is largely so, owing to its own and its neighbor's unwillingness to give girls to outsiders. Its members usually speak the same language, which is often peculiar to the tribe. Tribes that have long been in contact with Hinduism have modified their original type, and have come to conform more or less closely to the pattern of an ordinary caste, and to adopt the restrictions associated with the caste system".

4. 1931 "...no serious attempt had been made from 1891 onwards to arrive at the figures of the hill and forest tribes.
The 1931 Census marked the transition in the notion of a *tribe* from the hill and the forest tribes to that of the primitive tribes, for the first time gave a reasonably accurate estimate of the numbers and distribution of primitive tribes. Thus the notions of tribe evolved through the Censuses till that of the Scheduled Tribes replaced the label of primitive tribe in 1936".
Hutton
(Census of India)
5. 1932 "...in all cases, as it seems, it indicates a social group of simple kind members of which speak a common dialect, have a single Government and act together for some common purpose, like warfare."
Rivers
6. 1950 "a *tribe* is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes but without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration."
Majumdar
(Popular definition in Anthropology)
7. 1957 "the *aboriginals* or *tribals* have been defined as the tribals or semi-tribals of the independent countries deprived socially or economically and having their own customs, traditions and traits or they have their own special customary laws/conventions. ILO classified such people as *indigenous*."
International Labour Organization
Convention (ILO)

8. 1957 "...a social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization. It may include several sub-groups, such as sibs or villages. A tribe ordinarily has a leader and may have a common ancestor, as well as a patron deity. The families or small communities making up the tribe are linked through economic, social, religious, family or blood ties."
Winick's dictionary of Anthropology
9. 1964 "...a politically or socially coherent and autonomous group occupying or claiming a particular territory".
Notes and Queries on Anthropology
10. 1972 "...the meaning of the term *tribe* in Indian context suggests that the Sanskrit term "*Jana*" in the ancient time. The terms "*jana*" and "*jati*" used to be referred to these primitive communities of people are both derived from the root "*jan*", which means "to be born", or "to give birth to" and hence has a biological meaning. It implies that the term "*jana*" in ancient times referred to the autochthonous people who are today known as *tribes* christened by the British whose policy was to segregate these people from rest others. Thus in the Indian context, the *tribe* refers to the *indigenous janas*."
Ray
11. 1977 a. Their roots in the soil date back to a very early period - if they are not the original inhabitants, they are at least some of the oldest inhabitants of the land.
b. They live in the relative isolation of the hills and the forests.
c. Their sense of history is shallow for, among them, the remembered history of five to six generations tends to get merged with mythology.
d. They have a low level of techno-economic development.
e. In terms of their cultural ethos - language, institutions, beliefs, and customs - they stand out from other sections of society.
Dube
12. 1981 "...the *tribals* are descendants of the original clearers of the soil and are in possession of a land system, based on undeniable ethical principles and most rationally regulated down to the minutest details".
Encyclopaedia Mundarika
13. 1981 "...lack of specialization, social stratification (primordial society), ethnocentrism, i.e., group consciousness and endogamous principle governed by a strong communal organization reflected in the form of tribal panchayat (tribalism) are some of the basic features of *tribal* community".
Bhowmick
14. 1984 "a *tribe* is a collection of families bearing a common
Imperial Gazeteer of

	name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is usually endogamous though originally it might have not been so".	India
15. 1989	"...their sense of history is shallow or mixed with mythology and in terms of their cultural ethos, language, customs, institutions and beliefs they stand out from other section of the society".	Padhy and Satpathy
16. 2000	"a group of people of same race, and with same customs, language, religion, etc., living in a particular area and often led by a chief".	Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary
17. 2000	"an endogamous social group held to be descended from a common ancestor and composed of numerous families, exogamous clans, bands, or villages that occupies a specific geographic territory and possesses cultural, religious, and linguistic homogeneity, and is commonly united politically under one head or chief".	Webster's Dictionary
18. 2000	"...the families or communities that constitute a tribe are said to trace their descent from a common ancestor".	Encyclopaedia Britannica

When we look into all these definitions, the term *tribe* refers to early settlers or the autochthonous group of people with simple technology. Historically the term has been referred as "territorial communities living in the relative isolation of hills and forests, which in some way has kept them apart from the main stream of society in the country partly because of isolation and partly because of their limited world view". The other principal features of the tribal population have been its ecological and social isolation, which has left a definite impression on their social systems and has given them a common destiny in Indian Society. For this situation, one of the crucial problems faced by all tribal communities in India is the problem of integration into the wider social, economic and political systems. The distinctive features of tribes are autonomous social entities. No one tribe can claim to be socially superior to another. They are territorially and linguistically more homogeneous than castes. With rare exceptions, individual tribes do not have distinctive occupations. However, like castes tribes are also endogamous groups. Tribal society is egalitarian. Except for the village headman or the clan or tribal chief, all the members of the tribe enjoy equal social status. The status of women among tribal societies is largely equal to that of men. Tribal societies allow choosing their spouses. Tribal people do not have a dowry system and permits divorce and remarriage both for divorced women and widows. On the contrary the usual practice is that of a bride price where the groom's parents have to compensate the bride's family with money and presents for the loss of an earning member of the family. The evils of child marriage, female infanticide and prostitution are unknown in tribal society. Tribal religion is animistic, consisting of worship of local deities, both benevolent and malevolent, and of the spirits of

ancestors (Misra and Nagar, 1997).

The Census reports available since 1891 show a variation in the tribal population from one census to the other. This is because the tribal were enumerated under different names and heads in different Censuses, as for example, people having a tribal form of religion (1891), animists (1901), primitive tribe (1931), tribe (1941) and Scheduled Tribe (1951).

The need to specify *tribes* as "**Scheduled Tribes**" (ST) arose only after the Constitution of India came into force on January 26, 1950. The term "Scheduled Tribes" was inserted in the Indian Constitution vide Article 342(1) which states that the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is State, after consultation with the Governor or the Rajpramukh of a State thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of the Constitution be deemed to be "Scheduled Tribes" in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be. Therefore, Scheduled Tribe refers to such tribes or tribal communities so are declared to be STs by President of India by Public Notification Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner. Once these lists have been promulgated, inclusion therein or exclusion there from can be made only by a law of Parliament (Article 342 (2)) (However, in Article 366 of Part XIX Miscellaneous (25) "Scheduled Tribes" means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution). In pursuance of this power, in 1950-51 first list of such Scheduled Tribes were notified by the President and are contained in the Schedules appended in the Order.

Primitiveness and backwardness were the tests applied in preparing the lists of STs in 1950 and 1956. In revising the lists of STs in 1965, other criteria booked for were "more indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness". On the basis of the data of 1961 Census, an attempt was made to identify the most backward tribes in terms of: percentage of literacy of each tribe; percentage of workers engaged in various occupations; remoteness and inaccessibility of the habitat; mode of agriculture, whether shifting, terrace, etc., adopted by a tribe; and other available published material including the list of the most backward tribes given in the Dhebar Commission's Report. From the 1960s there has also been a development of another kind. Members of castes, particularly the intermediate castes with economic clout, pressed their claim to be recognized as Scheduled Tribes.

In its questionnaire the Report of the Backward Classes Commission described the Scheduled Tribes as: "The STs can also be generally ascertained by the fact that they live apart in hills, and even where they live on the plains they lead a separate, excluded existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of people. STs may belong to any religion. They are listed as STs because

of kind of life led by them". The Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (1967-68) further stated: "...an earnest effort has been made to locate the most backward among the STs. The study has shown that while some of them are most backward educationally and some others most backward economically, there are a third group of tribes amongst them who are most backward both educationally and economically. The third group comprising both educationally and economically most backward tribes is decidedly the *weakest link* in that chain".

The main purpose of the recognition of tribal community as "Scheduled Tribes" under the Constitution is to bring such population on a par with other section of population and integrate them with the mainstream of national life because these communities would require special measures for being integrated and for being brought on a par with other sections of populations. This administrative action makes each community as "Scheduled Tribe" and entitled it to special protection and privileges. However, the anthropological definition of tribal communities for theoretical purpose do not appear to be identical/related to the communities that have been included in the list of "Scheduled Tribes" for operational purposes. Many people who are *tribal* according to anthropological definition may not be considered as "Scheduled Tribes" while the other people who are *tribal* according to anthropological definition may be considered also as Scheduled Tribes. On the other hand some people do not characterize anthropological definition of tribe, still they are included in the list of "Scheduled Tribe" for operational purposes. Thus, there are controversies regarding the universal definition of *tribe* and mode of their scheduling as "Scheduled Tribes" described in the Constitution among the social scientists. In fact, the definition of tribe given by the anthropologists and scientists is a very useful tool for labeling of social processes.

Prior to Constitution, the term "Scheduled Tribe" was not in vogue, but the tribes was variously termed as "*Vanyajati*" (caste of forest), "*Pahari*" (hill dweller), "*Adivasi*" (first settler), "*Janjati*" (folk people), "*Aboriginal*" and so on. Up to 1919, the tribes were included under the head of "*Depressed Classes*".

Various scientists have given the different nomenclature to *tribe* too. Tallents (Census, 1901) regard them as *Animists*. Risley (1908) called them *Hill tribes*: Sir Baine (1912) included them in the category of *Hill Tribes, Jungle peoples, Forest tribes* or *folk*, Sedwick (1921) and Hutton (1931) called them as *Primitive Tribes* whereas Grigson (1938) regards them as *Hill Tribes* or *Wilder aboriginal*. Elwin (1943) and Thakkar called them *Aboriginal* and Ghurye (1963) called them *Backward Hindus* while Des and Das (From Naik 1968) renamed them as *Submerged humanity*. Gandhi gave them the name *Girijan* (people living in hills and mountains) (Naik, 1968). The tribal groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological section of the national population hence the term "*Adivasi*"

(original inhabitant or original owner or original settler of the country) has become current to designate these groups. The term "Scheduled Tribe" (ST) is the most recent of a long series of labels that have been used to denote a particular sector of the socially and economically disadvantaged population in Indian society. The Scheduled Tribe together with Scheduled Castes (SC) and other disadvantaged sectors have often been collectively referred to as the "*depressed classes*" and the "*backward classes*". First used in 1935, the term Scheduled Tribe have evolved through a variety of philanthropic, administrative and political compromises and considerations. They cover a cluster of separate deprivation such as poverty, illiteracy, and poor access to education, health care, employment and other opportunities. The term ST denotes an aborigine population that practices animistic religion and is physically and culturally isolated from the mainstream. These characteristics have historically been considered to be significant enough to make the STs as distinctly different and more disadvantaged than the mass of the rural and urban poor (Chitnis, 1997).

The Constitution names the Scheduled Tribes as *weaker section* of the society eligible for special protection and care. It does not define the term Scheduled Tribe. Nor does it provide detailed criteria by which these groups may be identified. It only prescribes that in the first instance these groups shall be designated for each State by a Presidential Order in consultation with the Governor of each State with subsequent modification by an Act of Parliament.

The identification of tribe was less difficult up to the early twentieth. They were included within the depressed classes. But in the wake of the Communal Award, they were clearly identified as aboriginals who practiced animistic religions. The general notion since then has been that this category should include groups distinguished by their "tribal characteristics" and by their spatial and cultural isolation from the population.

The British protected the tribals by placing them outside of ordinary administration and by treating their habitations as separate reserves (Marc Galanter, 1984). The Government of India Act of 1935 provided for separate representation for the "*Backward Tribes*" just as it did for the untouchable castes. Accordingly a list of *backward tribes* was promulgated for this purpose.

Soon after independence, the tribes were somewhat differently defined for administrative reasons. The main characteristics, which are common, to all the STs of India were briefly described as: primitive way of living; habitation in remote and less easily accessible areas; and nomadic habits and love for drinks and dance. The post-independence scheduling of tribes was much less complicated. In 1950 when the President promulgated the list of Scheduled Tribes, he only made some addition to the 1935 list of Backward Tribes. Further, there were some transfers from the earlier Scheduled Caste list (e.g. in Bengal) to the Scheduled Tribe list and vice-versa. The STs were defined partly by the habitat

and geographic isolation but mainly on the basis of their social, religious, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness and their tribal characteristics.

However, archaeological evidences suggest that until about five thousands years ago, all Indian society consisted of tribal people living by hunting-gathering-fishing. Thus the tribes (or aboriginal communities) antedate the castes by many millennia, and have been the primary source for the formation of castes and recruitment of members to different castes, particularly those within the middle and lower rungs of the caste hierarchy after the setting up of permanent farming-based settlements and specialization of occupation. For this reason the caste population has been steadily expanding at the expense of the tribal population. The areas now inhabited by the tribes were habitat even of their ancestors "from the earliest times because they were ideally suited for their hunting-gathering mode of life". The incipient caste system of the Indus Civilization and the early village farming communities of regions beyond this civilization crystallized into the fullfledged caste system by the middle of the first millennium B.C. The phenomenon of cultural and biological closeness of the lower castes in general and of the SCs particular with the tribes can be explained only by the hypothesis that the former were originally members of tribal society and were subsequently incorporated into caste society (Misra and Nagar, 1997).

The present position of tribes appears to be different when we look back at the attempts to define a tribe. Now a *tribe* does have an occupation or a set of occupations, there is much less of blood feud now. The tribes speak many languages. They are very mobile and some of them have moved across a large part of country. They are endogamous. They have a set of commensally rules. They practice all types of marriages, marriage by negotiation, being the most prominent. Though the most primitive groups of the country are tribes, all tribes are not primitive. Sections of tribes are as advanced today as sections of middle class anywhere. Isolation is ending. Tribes are no longer nomadic, or have nomadic habits. They cannot be distinguished only by "a love for drinks and dance". They have a cultural system, which has sustained them. The tribes may be described as communities, which inter alia are relatively isolated with a sharper sense of identity (Singh, 1997). Saraswati (1997) says it is legitimate to separate tribe only in the evolutionary sense of cultural progression: *tribe* as a pre-literate, pre-logical, pre-cultural simple group.

Diversity and affinities of Tribes

The total ST population of our country constitutes 8.08% of the total population of India as per 1991 Census. They are spread over all the States except Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. Out of their total population only 6.20% are urbanized. A monumental study on the "People of India"(POI) project of Anthropological Survey of India have identified as many as 4694 living human communities (castes, tribes and others), including 461 tribal communities, 324

functioning languages and 25 scripts in the States and Union Territories that comprise our nation (Singh, 1994). The geographical distribution of percentages of SC and ST populations are in inverse proportion to each other, both in respect to region and States (including Union Territories). This marked variation is directly related to their geography. Those regions and States, which have larger areas of hilly, rocky and forested land, either unfit for or only marginally suited to agriculture, have a very low population density, smaller SC population and bigger ST population. Central India, including C.G. have extensive hilly and forested tracts and therefore have lower percentages of SC population and higher percentages of ST population. The archaeological evidences do not support the widely held assumption among others that the tribal communities of India were pushed into the inhospitable hilly and forested environments by the economically and politically more powerful and aggressive communities, particularly the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages because it has little scientific basis. While there is no doubt that there have been both local and long distance migrations of tribal peoples, during prehistoric as well as historic times, by and large the tribal communities occupy the same habitats which their ancestors had occupied for tens, even hundreds of thousands years (Misra and Nagar, 1997).

The People of India project concluded that India is a land of many languages and races, and also the homeland of many communities distributed in various ecological niches, rooted in resource endowments of various regions, involved with other communities in varying forms of production relationship and other linkages. There is extraordinary range of diversities of all types, biological (morphological and genetical), linguistic and cultural within a community and across communities, within a region and across regions. POI has generated information on 776 cultural traits relating to identify, ecology, social organization, occupation, linkages, impact of change and development and found that non-shared exclusively tribal traits are few than the non-tribal traits except in the north-east. There is a tremendous amount of diversity as also a great deal of interpenetration of traits. These communities have interacted a great deal and shared a good deal. They have maintained their identity, and they have also tried to integrate themselves with the larger processes, which have been at work, historically.

The nascent State **Chhattisgarh** (C.G.) (constituted on 1st November, 2000) holds unique position in the tribal map of country. The ST constitutes 32.83% of the State's total population, which is larger than that of many States. It is interesting to note that the growth rate of ST population is higher than that for National population. As per 1991 census ST population in the country grew by 25.67% while the total population in the country grew by 23.79%. There are forty-two tribal communities included in the list of ST in Chhattisgarh. There is bewildering variation in population size of the individual ST in Chhattisgarh ranging from 411 Mawasi to 31,52,237 Gond (refer Pie diagrams). The other major

Table 1 - District- wise total population and ST population in Chhattisgarh *

S. No.	District/ State/ Country	Total Population	Male ST	Female ST	Total ST	% of population to total population of C.G.	% of ST to total population	Sex ratio of ST
1	Bilaspur	3793566	436217	437524	873741	15.28	23.03	1002.99
2	Raigarh	1722291	407056	414421	821477	14.37	46.69	1018.09
3	Surguja	2082630	565719	551854	1117577	19.55	53.66	975.49
4	Bastar	2271314	759024	770864	1529888	26.75	67.35	1015.59
5	Durg	2197134	147768	150291	298059	5.21	13.56	1017.07
6	Raipur	3908042	352561	361466	714027	12.49	18.27	1025.25
7	Rajnandgaon	1439951	177703	184652	362355	6.34	25.16	1039.10
8	Chhattisgarh	17414928	2846048	2871076	5717124	-	32.83	1008.79
9	Madhya Pradesh	66181170	7758174	7640860	15399034	-	23.27	984.87
10	India	838583988	34363271	33395109	67758380	-	8.08	971.8

Old District- wise population. At present Chhattisgarh consists of sixteen districts : Bastar, Kanker (North Bastar), Dantewada (South Bastar), Bilaspur, Janjgir-Champa, Korba, Raigarh, Jashpur, Surguja, Koriya, Durg, Raipur, Dhamtari, Mahasamund, Rajnandgaon, Kabirrdham.

*CENSUS - 1991

Fig. 1. District wise tribal population of C.G.
(Population figure refer to table1)

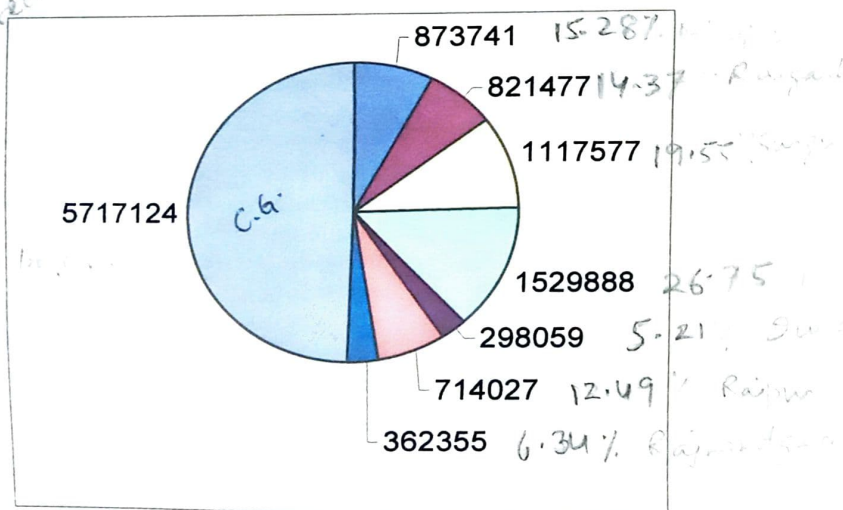


Table 2 - Tribe-wise distribution of population in Chhattisgarh *

S. No.	Name of Tribe	Male	Female	Total	%ST	Sex ratio	Main* Population	Rank Distribution according to population
1	Agariya	22248	22251	44499	0.788	1000.13	7	14
2	Andh	294	336	630	0.011	1142.85	7, 2	40
3	Baiga	27119	27211	54330	0.950	1003.39	2, 6, 7	13
4	Bhaina	19952	19727	39679	0.694	988.72	2	16
5	Bharia	42488	42665	85153	1.489	1004.16	7, 4, 2	7
6	Bhatra	75385	76408	151793	2.655	1013.57	1	5
7	Bhil, Bhilala	4247	4396	8643	0.151	1035.08	5, 6	27
8	Bhil Mina	287	221	508	0.008	770.03	2	41
9	Bhunja	3866	4035	7901	0.138	1043.71	5	28
10	Biar, Biyar	2175	2088	4263	0.074	960.0	7, 2	31
11	Binjhar	44762	46408	91170	1.594	1036.77	5, 2, 4	6
12	Birhul, Birhor	748	790	1538	0.026	1056.14	4, 2	36
13	Damor	553	517	1070	0.018	934.90	6, 2	39
14	Dhanwar	17272	17176	34448	0.602	994.44	2	17
15	Gadaba	2867	3063	5930	0.103	1068.36	2	30
16	Gond	1567331	1584906	3152237	55.13	1011.21	1, 5, 2, 7, 6, 3, 4	1
17	Halba, Halbi	131217	133333	264550	4.62	1016.12	3, 1, 6	4
18	Kamar	8660	8958	17618	0.308	1034.41	5	20
19	Karku	652	578	1230	0.021	886.50	5, 2	37
20	Kawar	323486	324173	647659	11.328	1002.21	4, 7, 2	2
21	Khairwar	27327	27160	54487	0.953	933.88	7	11
22	Kharia	16134	17011	33145	0.579	1054.35	4	18
23	Kondh	4256	4609	8865	0.155	1082.94	5, 4	25
24	Kol	8284	8334	16618	0.290	1006.03	2, 7	21
25	Kolam	2001	1696	3697	0.064	847.57	4, 2	32
26	Korku	1604	1323	2927	0.051	824.81	5	34
27	Korwa	42049	42097	84146	1.471	1001.14	7, 4	8
28	Majhi	27732	26684	54416	0.951	962.20	4, 7	12
29	Majhwar	21731	21728	43459	0.760	999.86	7, 2	15
30	Mawasi	219	192	411	0.007	876.71	4, 2, 3	42
31	Munda	4857	4894	9751	0.170	1007.61	4	24
32	Nagesia	40558	40306	80864	1.414	993.78	7, 4	9
33	Oraon	264718	265688	530406	9.277	1003.66	4, 7	3
34	Pao	5989	6045	12034	0.210	1009.35	2, 4, 7	23
35	Pardhan	4377	4376	8753	0.153	999.77	2, 1	26
36	Pardhi	3674	3680	7354	0.128	1001.63	2, 3, 1	29
37	Parja	896	853	1749	0.030	952.00	1, 4	35
38	Sahariya	539	635	1174	0.020	1178.10	4, 2	38
39	Saonta	1480	1479	2959	0.051	999.32	2	33
40	Saur	9752	10051	19803	0.346	1030.66	2, 5, 6	19
41	Sawar	33665	35079	68744	1.202	1042.00	5, 6, 2	10
42	Sonr	7508	7564	15072	0.263	1007.46	5	22
43	Unclassified	21089	20352	41441	1.525	965.05	1, 7, 4	
Total	Chhattisgarh	2846048	2871076	5717124	100.00	1008.79		

*Census 1991

INDEX (Main distribution shows Code No. of district according to density of population)

District Code No.: Bastar-1, Bilaspur-2, Durg-3, Raigarh-4, Raipur-5, Rajnandgaon-6, Surguja-7.

tribes with strength of more than five lakh each are Kwar (6,47,659) and Oraon (5,30,406). Gond is the principal tribe of Chhattisgarh as well as India too. Gond along with Kwar and Oraon tribes constitute about 75% of the total tribal population of Chhattisgarh. The Halba and Bhatra tribes follow them with a population more than one and half lakh. There are eight tribes follow them with a population more than fifty thousand but less than one lakh. There are five other tribes with a population of ten thousand to twenty thousand. Seven tribes follow them with a population between five thousand to ten thousand and nine tribes with a population less than five thousand. There are three tribes with a population even less than one thousand. The tribes are distributed in almost all the districts of C.G. though the density of tribal population to the total population of the district differ from district to district ranging from as low as 13.56% in Durg district to more than 67.36% in Bastar district (undivided districts of C.G.) (Tables 1 and 2). The tribes of C.G. varied in their ethnic composition, religion, language, education, economic and cultural pattern (Table 3).

Table 3. Population of different tribes of Chhattisgarh.

S.No.	Population	Tribe
1	>30,00,000	Gond
2	>5,00,000 < 7,00,000	Kwar, Oraon
3	>1,00,000 < 3,00,000	Halba, Bhatra
4	>50,000 < 1,00,000	Binjhar, Bharia, Korwa, Nagesia, Sawar, Khairwar, Majhi, Baiga
5	>25,000 < 50,000	Agaria, Majhar, Bhaina, Dhanwar, Kharia
6	>5,000 < 20,000	Saur, Kamar, Kol, Sonr, Pao, Munda, Kondh, Pardhan, Bhil, Bhunjia, Pardhi, Gadaba
7	<5,000	Biar, Kolem, Saonta, Koru, Parja, Birhor, Karku, Saharia, Damor, Andh, Bhil Mina, Mawasi.

Seventy-four primitive tribal communities have been identified by the Government of India in various States/ Union Territories for taking up special socio-economic development programmes on the basis of their primitive technology: extremely low level of literacy and small, stagnant diminishing population. Among them five *primitive tribes* namely – *Abujmaria*, *Baiga*, *Birhor*, *Hill Korwa* and *Kamar* live in Chhattisgarh.

As a consequence of integration and assimilation processes, the tribal societies of India represent every stage of economic and social evolution from prehistoric hunting-gathering to settled agriculture (Haimendorf, 1948). Thus economically, tribal societies present a great diversity. Nearly all of them now, however, include a certain proportion of hunting and gathering in their subsistence system.

Traditionally, the people of India may be broadly classified into four types on the basis of their morphological/physical types- Negrito, Australoid, Mongoloid, and Caucasoid (although these are rather old and dated- sounding terms, especially perhaps in the United States). The characteristics and present geographical distributions of these types (Majumder, 1998) are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics and present geographical distribution of types of people of India.

Type	Morphological Characterization	Distribution
Negrito	Short stature, frizzy hair with fine texture, brachycephalic head, dark complexion, short and protruding face, broad nose, thick and everted lips.	Andaman Islands, Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu.
Australoid	Short stature (taller than Negrito), wavy to curly hair, hyperdolichocephalic to dolichocephalic head, dark complexion, stout brow ridges, sunken nasal root, abundance of body hair.	Chiefly the central and southern regions.
Mongoloid	Short stature, broad shoulders, scanty facial and body hair, brachycephalic head, flat face, prominent cheek bones, flat nose, epicanthic fold.	Sub-Himalayan and north-east regions.
Caucasoid	Generally tall stature, dolichocephalic to brachycephalic head, light complexion, straight to wavy hair, sometimes light eyes, arched forehead, long face with well developed chin, narrow and prominent nose.	Found in most regions.

On the basis of morphological/physical features Guha (1931) considers that the tribal population of India belongs to Proto-Australoid, Mongoloid and Negrito physical types. The tribes of Chhattisgarh chiefly exhibit Proto-Australoid physical type viz. short to medium stature, wavy to curly hair, hyperdolichocephalic to dolichocephalic head, dark complexion, stout brow ridges, broad and small face, flattened nose and sunken nasal root. Anthropologists have tried to explain the phenomenon of this diversity by forwarding the *fission* and *fusion* theories. However, existing data are too meager to permit any generalization and there is homogeneity in the traits shared by

different population groups of a particular region.

It has been said that India is a living Tower of Babel! There are eighteen national languages recognized by the Indian constitution and these are spoken in over 1600 dialects. In many cases the State boundaries have been drawn on linguistic lines. The tribes also speak a number of languages of their own. The tribes of India have been found to speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages indicating a great deal of variety. Considering linguistic map of India the tribal communities speaking Indo-Aryan languages are 163 (North, West and East India), Dravidian 107 (South and Central India), Tibeto-Burman 143 including Siamese-Chinese 1 (North-East bordering States), Austro-Asiatic 30 (East and Central India) and Andamanes 4 (Andaman) (Singh, 1994). A large number of tribes are bilingual in their regional, state or scheduled language, apart from their mother tongue. The process of cultural contact leading to varying degrees of integration or total assimilation, some tribes have lost their original languages these days and adopted the languages of the neighboring castes. Linguistically the tribal populations of Chhattisgarh speak dialects that belong to one of the three-language groups- Austro-Asiatic family, Dravidian family and Indo-European family, which represent the major language families present in India. Some tribes are bilingual and even trilingual, speaking Chhattisgarhi and Hindi apart from their mother tongue (Table 5).

Table 5. Tribal language families of Chhattisgarh.

	Indo-Aryan	Dravidian (including Siamese- Chinese1)	Tibeto- Burman	Austro- Asiatic
No. of Community	163	107	143	30
Region	N-W-E	S-C	N-E	E-C

Archaeological evidences suggests most probably the people of the Indus Civilization as also those of Neolithic culture of South India were speakers of the Dravidian languages, as is suggested by the presence of isolated pockets of these languages like the Brahui in Baluchistan and the Kurukh in the Nepal Tarai and Chota Nagpur, as well as their main stronghold in the South-India (Allchin, 1963). Agriculture -based life in western India began to appear from the end of the third millennium B.C. and appears to have been the combined contribution of the survivors of the Indus people and the Indo-Aryan speakers or Aryans who were entering the country from the west (Sankalia, 1979; Agrawal, 1980; Allchin and Allchin, 1982; Dhavlikar, 1990). Farming-based, settled life in eastern India was probably introduced by the speakers of the Austro-Asiatic (or Mundari or Kol) languages from the east who are also believed to have brought shouldered and splayed stone axes and megalithic tradition (Haimendorf, 1945). The

distribution of these languages largely coincides with that of the distinctive stone axe types and the eastern megalithic tradition (Misra and Nagar, 1997). However, some linguists suggest the following sequence of migrations of the major language groups into India: Austric – Dravidian - Indo-European. Whether these language families developed within the country or came in with migration of people from outside the sub-continent is also a problem of major concern.

Linguistic approach to explain biological diversity in Indian population is particularly interesting. It has been argued that tribal belonging to different language families represent different genetic lineage (Parpola, 1975). Therefore, it is of interest to study the genetic relationship among the tribal groups of Chhattisgarh State who speak dialects belonging to different language families using DNA markers (because they are much more polymorphic and are generally selectively neutral). We have attempted such study to see congruence of genomic and ethnolinguistic affinities among five tribal groups of Chhattisgarh using sixteen biallelic DNA marker loci and found good correspondence between the genomic and ethnolinguistic affinities (Mukherjee et al, 2000).

Enormous amount of **biological diversity** in prehistoric and living population is also impressive and unique in our country. Religion, language group and complex social organization are the main factors influencing the genetic complexity of India. Several attempts have been made by researchers to describe and explain this biological diversity on blood group polymorphic traits, biochemical polymorphic traits and other genetical traits. These studies reveal the tribes in different parts of the country are genetically more dissimilar than non-tribes, indicating their diverse origins, long isolation or genetic drift (Roychoudhury, 1983). Using the ABO blood group gene frequency data the pattern of gene differentiation among the population of Central India (including C.G.) has been investigated by Mitra and Kumar (1993) and found that the gene differentiation among these population groups is only about two percent. While much of this variability is indigenous, a considerable fraction of it has been through large scale multiple waves of immigration into India during prehistoric and historic times and the subsequent cultural differentiation resulting in strict rules governing mating practices. Because genes move with people, the entry of diverse genetic element into India must be a major reason for the extra-ordinary biological diversity of contemporary Indian people. Therefore, from an evolutionary standpoint it is of immense interest to quantify biological diversity in contemporary human populations, to study biological affinities and diversities and to relate observed pattern of affinities with cultural, linguistic and demographic histories of population (Majumder, 1998). Genetic evidences using DNA markers suggest that Indian castes are most likely to be of proto-Asian origin with West Eurasian admixture resulting in the genetic affinities of castes to Asians and Europeans (Bamshad et al. 2001). Our analysis using DNA markers also support this finding and also provide evidence in support of the hypothesis

that the Austro-Asiatic speakers are the most ancient inhabitants of India (Roychoudhury et. al., 2001). Our another study have also provided evidence that South-east Asia was peopled by two waves of migration, one originating in India and the other originating in Southern China (Roychoudhury et. al., 2000).

Chhattisgarh consists of a large number of ethnic groups and is the home to many tribal populations; therefore it offers a unique opportunity of study of human genome diversity research. The ethnic tribal populations harboring the Chhattisgarh are considered a hot spot of human genome diversity research. Different tribal groups living side by side for hundreds or even thousands of years try to retain their separate entities by practicing endogamy consequently retaining the genetic material within the group. Besides, uniqueness of tribes in terms of their socio-cultural characteristics, especially diversity of languages, social organization and various customary practices shed light on the unique history of each population. Although evolutionary biology is of our fundamental interest, we seek to gain novel insights into the micro-evolutionary events that render the genomic diversity. So far no work has been initiated to tap the vast repertoire of unexplored wealth of information on tribes of Chhattisgarh and hence requires an early initiation of studies.

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